

■ Skateboard park

Officials applaud park versus street

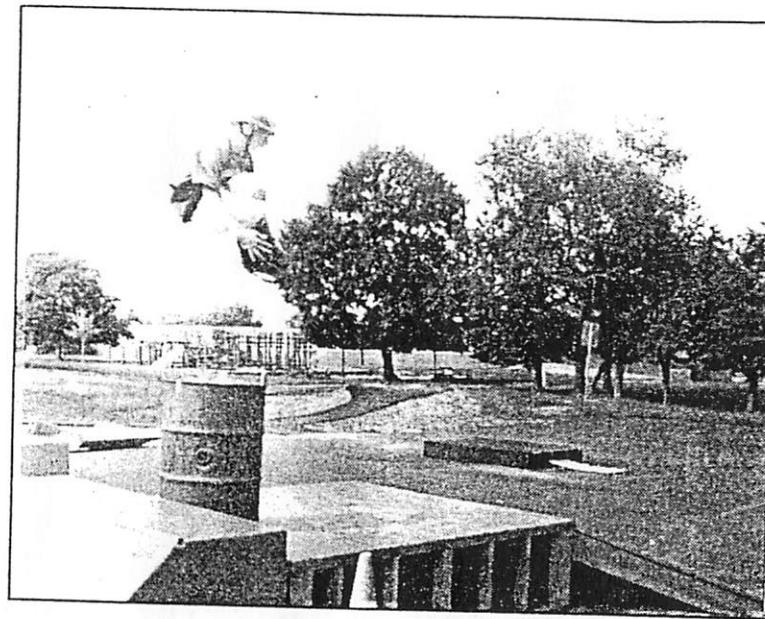
By Christopher Sealey
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DUXBURY — As the Duxbury skateboard park prepares to celebrate its one year anniversary this fall, it seems as though the project has done wonders for local skateboarding youths and the community as a whole.

The park has given kids an area to practice their skateboarding skills, and, according to Duxbury Police Lt. Donald Sjodstedt, there have been far fewer instances of business owners complaining of skateboarders on their property.

"The calls from local businesses have decreased an awful lot," said Sjodstedt. "There's much less of a problem between businesses and skateboarders than there used to be."

Local skateboarder Phil Langlois, 14, is happy that kids now have a place to skate free of harassment. He attributes the decline in business complaints to



Staff photo/Christopher Sealey

Extremely pleased — Most people are happy with the way things have turned out with the town's skateboard park.

the creation of the park.

"I'm really glad we have the park to go to," said Langlois. "For a while there was no place to skate except on the streets

near businesses, and the owners were getting mad."

The skateboarding problems in town, particularly near Hall's Cor-

Please turn to page A11

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Continued from page A1

ner, were not only an annoyance to proprietors, but also developed into quite a hazardous situation, according to Sjostedt. "Hall's Corner was a more dangerous situation for everyone, particularly with the skateboarders frequently riding through traffic," he said. "In retrospect, I think the skateboard park was a good idea and a safer alternative."

The park was built late last October as a collaborative effort between the town and local youths. The total cost of the project neared \$15,000, but much of the labor and funding was donated and raised by the skateboarders and their supporters.

Duxbury Recreation director Gordon Cushing cites the skateboard park as a shining example of citizens and town officials cooperating to achieve a common goal. "This project was unique in that a lot of people got together to get something done," Cushing said.

While the town did donate the land for the park, skateboarders first had to agree to a set of stringent safety rules governing park usage and requiring helmets for all skaters.

Town Manager Rocco Longo was particularly concerned with the helmet rule, and has said that the park will remain open as long as kids are wearing their helmets.

Parent Paul Duggan has worked extensively with the town concerning the skateboard park.

It appears as though skaters have complied with safety rules, but Cushing said there have been some minor problems. "If there is a downside to the skateboard park project, it has been the few difficulties we have had with some kids who do not want to follow the safety equipment rules," said Cushing. "However, most kids do follow the rules, and it's getting better all the time."

A group of skateboarders who frequent the park competed in Wareham earlier this summer and came away with some prizes. John and Jimmy Duggan, as well as Xazi and Oliver Arana participated in the competition.

While the skateboard park has remained popular

among local youths, supporters of the project are having trouble maintaining the physical condition of the park. Many of the park's skateboarding obstacles have worn down, and skaters are looking to repair and maintain the existing facilities themselves, since they have received little help from the town.

"We're looking to do some basic repairs and get simple things like trash barrels and a water fountain, but we are faced with extensive red tape and little town support," said Duggan. "Rocco was very supportive to get this off the ground, and now he is saying that we must keep it going ourselves."

Parents of skateboarders and the skaters themselves attribute a lack of continued town support to the "alternative" nature of the skateboarding subculture and the fact that skateboarding is not yet a mainstream sport.

"People think these kids are all misfits and they want to drop them in one place and forget about them," said Duggan. "If you support Little League, why can't you support local skateboarders?"

Parent Claire Langlois sees skateboarding as a harmless physical alternative for kids, and believes that the park is not popular in town because of the various stereotypes regarding skateboarders.

"There's definitely a prejudice against these kids," said Langlois. "I've found them to be very respectful youths who just want a place to skate and blade, since many of them are too young to work and need something to do during the day."

In an effort to prevent the skateboard park from vanishing, skaters and their supporters are seeking assistance from parents who would be willing to supervise and maintain the area.

"If we can gain some ground-level parental support, the town can't take the park away from us," said Duggan. "I think they're hoping we fail, and we're not going to fail."

Eventually, the Duggans and other skateboard park supporters hope to incorporate into a non-profit organization that would fulfill the needs of and protect the rights of local skateboarders. Anyone interested in helping to preserve the skateboard park should contact the Duggans at 837-6690.